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CHAMPLAIN NOT CARTIER

MADE THE FIRST REFERENCE TO *

NIAGARA FALLS IN LITERATURE

BY
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THE FIRST REFERENCE TO NIAGARA FALLS IN LITERATURE



HE statement that Jacques Cartier, in 1535, was the first white man to hear about the Falls of Niagara, and to make reference to them, has often been printed: and never, so far as I know, has it been controverted.

Cartier, on his second voyage to Canada, in that year, ascended the St. Lawrence to Hochelaga, now Montreal.

Marc Lescarbot's *Histoire de la Nouvelle France* describes Cartier's voyages. This work was first published in 1609, at Paris, and on page 381 is found the frequently quoted reference that has been regarded as the first mention of Niagara Falls in literature.

The substance of this reference, as given by O. H. Marshall, in "The Niagara Frontier" is as follows:

"He [Cartier] was told, that after ascending many leagues among rapids and waterfalls he would reach a lake, one hundred and fifty leagues long and forty or fifty broad, at the western extremity of which the waters were wholesome and the winters mild; that a river emptied into it from the south, which had its source in the country of the Iroquois; that beyond this lake he would find a cataract and portage; then another lake about equal to the former, which they had never explored; and still further on, a sea, the western shores of which they had never seen, nor had they heard of any one who had.

"This is the earliest historical notice of our great Lake Region."

Marshall's
Historical
writings
Albany,
1887
p. 275
and 276

Lescarbot
p. 381

This passage from Marshall has often been quoted; and all the writers on the history of this Region have placed Cartier's name first in the Bibliography of Niagara; and have made the quotation from Lescarbot (given below on page 8) the starting point of Niagara's printed history.

I have, myself, used these statements and have quoted them, verifying their general accuracy from the reference to Lescarbot.

But a careful reading of Lescarbot's book shows clearly that in this part of his work he is only quoting literally from Champlain's "Des Sauvages," (which was first published in 1604, five years before Lescarbot's book appeared) and that Lescarbot so states explicitly.

Lescarbot makes three references to Niagara Falls, one on page 379, another on page 381, and still another on page 383; but each one of the three is a literal quotation from Champlain's "Des Sauvages"; so the descriptions are not Cartier's at all.

Hence the date of the first reference to Niagara must be changed from 1535 to 1604, and the honor of being the first white man to tell anything whatsoever about it, must be transferred to Champlain.

Here are the proofs of this.

I have, and in this article I quote from, the original edition of Lescarbot's *Histoire de la Nouvelle France* (Paris, 1609).

I do not possess a copy of the original edition (Paris, 1604) of Champlain's "Des Sauvages." Very, very few persons or libraries do. So I quote from the 6-vol. edition (Quebec, 1870) of Champlain's works, edited by the Abbé Laverdière; "Des Sauvages" being in Vol. II.

Lescarbot's work is divided into three books.

Book two (*Livre Deuxieme*) has 48 chapters. The "Summary of the Chapters" of this book reads:

"In this book are described the voyages and navigations of Captain Jacques Cartier; and a voyage made by Jehan Francois de la Roque Sieur de Roberval, under King FRANCOIS I. is incidentally referred to. Also the most recent discoveries of Sieurs de Monts and de Poutrincourt; together with the voyages of Sieur Marquis de la Roche, and of Sieur Champlain: under the glorious reign of our King, Henry IIII."

Translation and
Italics
mine

Chapter 1, gives a summary of Cartier's two first voyages to Canada. Chapters 2-5, inclusive, give the history of Cartier's first voyage (1534). Chapters 6-8, inclusive, give part of the history of Cartier's second voyage (1535) following Cartier's own description and adding to it. Chapters 9-11, inclusive, give part of Champlain's voyage in 1603, following his descriptions in Chapters 1-5½ of his "Des Sauvages." Chapters 12-18, inclusive, give more of Cartier's 1535 voyage, following his own description and adding to it. Chapters 19-21, inclusive, give more of Champlain's 1603 voyage, quoted almost exactly, from middle of Chapter 5 to the end of chapter 9, of his "Des Sauvages." Chapters 22-27 inclusive, give the balance of the history of Cartier's 1535-6 voyage, following his own description. Chapters 28-48, inclusive, tell of other French voyages, to Canada, etc.

Cartier's own description of his second voyage to Canada, (1535-36), was published in Paris in 1545, under the title

"BRIEF RECIT, & succincte narration, de la nauigation faicte es yfles de Canada, Hochelage & Saguenay & autres, avec particulieres meurs, langage, & cerimonies des habitans d'icelles: fort delectable à veoir."

And Cartier therein has no reference to Niagara Falls, and but a very slight one to our Lake Region.

It is the basis of Lescarbot's description of Cartier's second voyage as above. It is a little volume of 48 sheets, 8 vo., only one copy being known to exist. It was reprinted, page for page, in Paris, in 1863, by Tross.

M. D'Avezac in his introduction to that reprint, referring to the original edition of Cartier's book, says:

"No one knows of any other publication of it excepting Lescarbot in his 'History of New France' (Book III. chapters 5-8, 12-18 and 22-27), where Cartier's voyage is pieced out by and intermingled with, non-consecutive fragments of Champlain's voyage."

Page XVI.

Translation mine

NOTE—In the above quotation Book III. should have read Book II. There are only 26 chapters in Book III. The context proves that D'Avezac meant Book II. Note mine

Lescarbot ed. 1609, Chap. XIX., Book II., on page 365, is entitled:

"Voyage du Sieur Châplein depuis le Port de Sainte Croix jusques au Saut de la grande riviere, où font remarquées les rivières, îles, & autres choses qu'il a découvertes audit voyage: & particulièrement la riviere, & le peuple, & le pais des Iroquois."

And on page 366 in said Chapter Lescarbot says:

Translation mine

"Still in a voyage of some 200 leagues between St. Croix and the above mentioned fall, the said LaSalle has noticed some things which Cartier has not observed. Let us therefore hear what he [Champlain] says about his voyage."

Without noting the quotation which follows, word for word, (for it is very long, occupying Chapters XIX., XX. and XXI. of Lescarbot's book, and there are some slight changes in the spelling and orthography, and one or two short abridgments and additions), let me say that Lescarbot's *Histoire de la Nouvelle France*, 1609 ed., from the middle of page 366, in Chapter XIX., near the beginning thereof, to the end of Chapter XXI., on page 385, is an almost exact copy of Champlain's "Des Sauvages," from top of page 28 in Chapter VI., to end of Chapter IX. on page 48, ed. 1870, Vol. II.; as per Lescarbot's intention, expressed above, to quote him. But I quote the three references in Chapters XX. and XXI. of Book II., in Lescarbot, that refer to Niagara Falls, and seriatim I compare each one with Champlain's "Des Sauvages," showing them to be mere quotations therefrom.

QUOTATION NO. 1

In Chapter XX., on page 379, Lescarbot, in narrating what "the savages who were with us told us," says:

Lac "Et puis ils viennent dedans vn lac qui peut tenir quelques quatre-vingts lieues de long, où il y a quantité d'îles, & qu'au bout d'icelui l'eau y est salubre, & l'hiver doux. A la fin dudit lac ilz passent vn saut, qui est quelque

Niagara Falls

Saut

peu élevé, ou il y a peu d'eau, laquelle descend :
là ilz portent leurs canots par terre environ vn
quart de lieuë pour passer ce faut De là entrent
dans vn autre lac qui peut tenir quelques *Lac*
foixante lieuës de long, & que l'eau en est fort
salubre: estans à la fin ils viennent à vn détroit *Détroit*
qui contient deux lieuës de large, & va assez
avant dans les terres: qu'ilz n'avoient point
passé plus outre, & n'avoient veu la fin d'un *Lac in-*
lac qui est à quelques quinze ou seize lieuës d'ou *fini*
ils ont esté, ni que ceux qui leur avoient dit
eussent veu homme qui l'eust veu."

Now compare with the above Champlain's "Des Sauvages,"
in Chapter VIII., Vol. II., page 42, where he tells "what two
savages who were with us related."

"Et puis ils viennent dedans vn lac qui peut *Le lac*
tenir quelques 80. lieuës de long, où il y a *Ontario*
quantité d'îles; & que au bout d'iceluy l'eau y
est salubre & l'hyuer doux. A la fin dudit lac,
ils passent vn fault qui est quelque peu élevé, où
il y a peu d'eau, laquelle descend. Là, ils *La chute* *Niagara*
portent leurs canots par terre enuiron vn quart *de*
de lieuë pour passer ce fault; de là entrent
dans vn autre lac qui peut tenir quelques *Le lac Erie*
foixante lieuës de long, & que l'eau en est fort
salubre. Estant à la fin ils viennent à vn
détroit qui contient deux lieuës de large, & *La rivière*
va assez auant dans les terres. Qu'ils n'auoient *du Détroit*
point passé plus outre, & n'auoient veu la fin
d'un lac qui est à quelques quinze ou seize lieuës *Le lac*
d'où ils font esté, ny que ceux qui leur auoient *Huron*
dict eussent veu homme qui le l'eust veu."

Translation of the two quotations above, both being the
same, from Publications of the Prince Society, Champlain's
Voyages, Boston, Vol. I., page 271.

"Then they come to a lake some eighty
leagues long, with a great many islands; the *Lake*
water at its extremity being fresh and the winter *Ontario*
mild. At the end of this lake they pass a fall,

Niagara Falls	Niagara Falls	somewhat high and with but little water flowing over. Here they carry their canoes overland about a quarter of a league, in order to pass the fall, afterwards entering another lake some sixty leagues long, and containing very good water. Having reached the end, they come to a strait two leagues broad and extending a considerable distance into the interior. They said they had never gone any farther, nor seen the end of a lake some fifteen or sixteen leagues distant from where they had been, and that those relating this to them had not seen any one who had seen it."
	Lake Erie	
	Detroit River	
	Lake Huron	

QUOTA- Lescarbot in Chapter XXI., on page 381, in narrating "what
TION No. 2 two or three Algonquins related" says:

	Lac.	" Puis viennent dedans vn lac qui contient quelques cent cinquante lieuës de long, & quelques quatre ou cinq lieuës à l'entrée dudit lac, il y a vne riviere qui va aux <i>Algonmequins</i> vers le Nort: Et vne autre qui va aux <i>Jroquois</i> , par où lesdits <i>Algonmequins</i> & <i>Iroquois</i> se font la guerre Et vn peu plus haut à la bède du Su dudit lac, il y a vne autre riviere qui va au <i>Jroquois</i> : puis venant à la fin dudit lac, ilz rencontrent vn autre laut où, ilz portent leurs canots: de là ils entrent dedans vn autre tres-grand lac, qui peut contenir autant comme le premier. Ilz n'ont esté que fort peu dâs ce dernier, & ont ouy dire qu'à la fin dudit lac il y a vne mer, dôt ilz n'ôt veu la fin, ne ouy dire qu'aucun l'ait veuë. Mais que là où ils ont esté, l'eau n'est point mauvaïse, d'autât qu'ilz n'ont point avancé plus haut, & que le cours de l'eau vient du côté du Soleil couchant venant à l'Orient, & ne sçavent si passé ledit lac qu'ils ont veu, il y a autre cours d'eau qui aille du côté de l'Occident: que le Soleil se couche à main droite dudit lac, qui est selon mon iugement au Noroüest, peu plus ou moins, & qu'au premier lac l'eau ne gele point, ce qui fait iuger que le temps y est temperé."
	Riviere des <i>Algonmequins</i> vers le Nort.	
	Riviere venant des <i>Iroquois</i> .	
Niagara Falls	Saut.	

Grand lac & in-
fini.

Now compare with the above Champlain's "Des Sauvages" in Chapter IX., Vol. II., pages 45 and 46, where he narrates what "two or three Algonquins told him."

Puis viennent dedans vn lac qui contient quelque cent cinquante lieuës de long; & quelques quatre ou cinq lieuës à l'entrée dudiët lac, il y a vne riuere qui va aux Algonmequins vers le Nort, & vne autre qui va aux Irocois; par où lefdiët Algonmequins & Irocois se font la guerre. Et vn peu plus haut à la bande du Su dudiët lac, il y a vne autre riuere qui va aux Irocois; puis venant à la fin dudiët lac, ils rencontrent vn autre fault, où ils portent leurs canots; delà ils entrent dedans vn autre très grand lac, qui peut contenir autant comme le premier. Ils n'y ont esté que fort peu dans ce dernier, & ont ouy dire qu'à la fin dudiët lac, il y a vne mer dont ils n'ont veu la fin, ne ouy dire qu'aucun l'aye veu; mais que là où ils ont esté, l'eau n'est point mauuaïse, d'autant qu'ils n'ont point aduancé plus haut; & que le cours de l'eau vient du costé du soleil couchant venant à l'Orient, & ne sçauent si passé le dits lacs qu'ils ont veu il y a autre cours d'eau qui aille du costé de l'Occident; que le soleil se couche à main droite dudiët lac, qui est, selon mon iugement, au Norouest peu plus ou moins; & qu'au premier lac l'eau ne gelle point, ce qui me fait iuger que le temps y est temperé.

La rivièr
Trent et la
baie de
Quinté
La rivièr
Noire

La rivièr
Oswego

Niagara
Falls

Translation of the two quotations above, both being the same, from Publications of the Prince Society, Champlain's Voyages, Boston, Vol. I., page 274.

"Then they enter a lake some hundred and fifty leagues in length, and some four or five leagues from the entrance of this lake there is a river extending northward to the Algonquins; and another towards the Iroquois where the said Algonquins and the Iroquois make war upon each other. And a little farther along, on the south shore of this lake, there is another river, extending towards the Iroquois; then,

The
River-like
Bay of
Quinté
Oswego
River

The
Genesee
River

Niagara
Falls

The Indians called
Lake
Huron
"Mer
douce"

after
which
they come
to Ni-
gara Falls

We can
easily re-
cognize
Lake On-
tario,
Lake Erie
and Ni-
gara Falls
although
this ac-
count is
exceed-
ingly
confused
and in-
accurate

arriving at the end of this lake, they come to another fall, where they carry their canoes; beyond this, they enter another very large lake as long, perhaps, as the first. The latter they have visited but very little, they said, and have heard that, at the end of it, there is a sea of which they have not seen the end, nor heard that any one has, but that the water at the point to which they have gone is not salt, but that they are not able to judge of the water beyond, since they have not advanced any farther; that the course of the water is from the west towards the east, and that they do not know whether, beyond the lakes they have seen, there is another watercourse towards the west; that the sun sets on the right of this lake; that is, in my judgment, northwest more or less; and that, at the first lake the water never freezes, which leads me to conclude that the weather there is moderate."

QUOTA-
TION No. 3

Lescarbot in Chapter XXI. page 383, in narrating "what a young Algonquin who has voyaged much on this great lake" related, says:

Grand-
sime lac
de trois
cets lieues

Niagara
Falls

Saut

Riviere
des Al-
goume-
quins au
grand
lac

"De là ils entrent dedans vn grandissime lac, qui peut contenir quelques trois cets lieues de long. Avançant quelques cent lieues dedans ledict lac, ils rencontrent vne ile qui est fort grande, où au delà de ladicte ile, l'eau est salubre; mais que passât quelques cets lieues plus avant, l'eau est encore plus mauvaise: Arrivant à la fin dudit lac, l'eau est du tout salée: Qu'il y a vn saut qui peut contenir vne lieue de large, d'où il descend vn grandissime courant d'eau dans ledit lac. Que passé ce saut, on ne voit plus de terre, ny d'un côté ne d'autre, finō vne mer si grāde qu'ils n'en ont point veu la fin, ni ouï dire qu'aucun l'ait veu: Que le Soleil se couche à main droite dudit lac, & qu'à son entree il y a vne riviere qui va aux *Algoumequins* & l'autre aux *Jroquois*, par où ilz se font la guerre."

Now compare what Champlain in "Des Sauvages," Chapter IX., Vol. II., page 47, narrating "what a young Algonquin who had voyaged far on this great lake" told him, says:

"Delà ils entrent dedans vn grandissime lac qui peut contenir quelques trois cents lieuës de long. Aduançant quelque cent lieuës dedans ledict lac, ils rencontrent vne isle, qui est fort grande, où, audelà de ladicte isle, l'eau est salubre; mais que passant quelques cent lieuës plus auant, l'eau est encore plus mauuaise; arriuant à la fin dudiect lac, l'eau est du tout salée. Qu'il y a vn fault qui peut contenir vne lieuë de large, d' où il descend vn grandissime courant d'eau dans le dict lac; que passé ce fault, on ne voit plus de terre ny d'vn costé, ne d'autre, sinon vne mer si grande qu'ils n'en n'ont point veu la fin, ny ouy dire qu'aucun l'aye veu. Que le soleil se couche à main droite dudiect lac, & qu'à son entrée il y a vne riuere qui va aux Algonmequins, & l'autre aux Irocois, par où ils se font la guerre."

Malgré les inexactitudes qui précèdent, on ne peut s'empêcher de reconnaître ici la chute de Niagara Falls

Translation of the two above quotations, both being the same, from Publications of the Prince Society, Champlain's Voyages, Boston, Vol. I. page 275 and 276.

"After this, they enter a very large lake, some three hundred leagues in length. Proceeding some hundred leagues in this lake, they come to a very large island, beyond which the water is good; but that, upon going some hundred leagues farther, the water has become somewhat bad, and, upon reaching the end of the lake it is perfectly salt. That there is a fall about a league wide, where a very large mass of water falls into said lake; that, when this fall is passed, one sees no more land on either side, but only a sea so large that they have never seen the end of it, nor heard that any one has; that the sun sets on the right of this lake, at the entrance to which there is a river extending towards the Algonquins, and another towards the Iroquois, by way of which they go to war."

Niagara Falls

"Mer douce" or Lake Huron

Lastly Lescarbot, on page 385, in Chapter XXII., and near the beginning thereof, after having quoted the entire preceding three chapters of his own book from Champlain, says:

Translation and
Italics
mine

"We shall now relate what the said Captain Cartier tells generally of the wonders of this great river of Canada, also of the river Saguenay and of the river of the Iroquois, *in order to compare his account with that which the said Champlain wrote, from which we have quoted the foregoing accounts.*" [les paroles ci-dessus.]

Champlain never saw Niagara or he would not have quoted such erroneous descriptions of it as the Indians related to him, without adding where, according to his own observation, these were inaccurate. The unequivocal statement of Lescarbot just before he commences to quote Champlain, that he is going to do so, and his open statement of his having done so, just after the long quotation, cover and settle this whole question. If anything in the way of circumstantial proof were needed on this special point, the almost absolute identity of Lescarbot's descriptions of Niagara and our Lake Region, in 1609, with those of Champlain, which first appeared in 1604, furnishes it.

The geographical
description is, not
unnaturally,
vague and
confused

Tross'
reprint,
1863,
page 34

Translation mine

Probably
Lake
Superior

Translation mine

Cartier *may* have heard of the "grand saut" or Niagara from the Indians in 1535, but it is absolutely unlikely that he did so, for in his account of that voyage, published in 1545, he makes no reference, nor even a suggestion of one, to it; yet he does refer very briefly to the great lakes.

This is the earliest known reference to our Lake Region, where Cartier, relating "what Donnacona and others told him," says:

"And beyond the said Saguenay, runs the above mentioned river, passing through two or three vast lakes, beyond which there is a sea of fresh water, but no one had ever been heard of who had seen the end thereof."

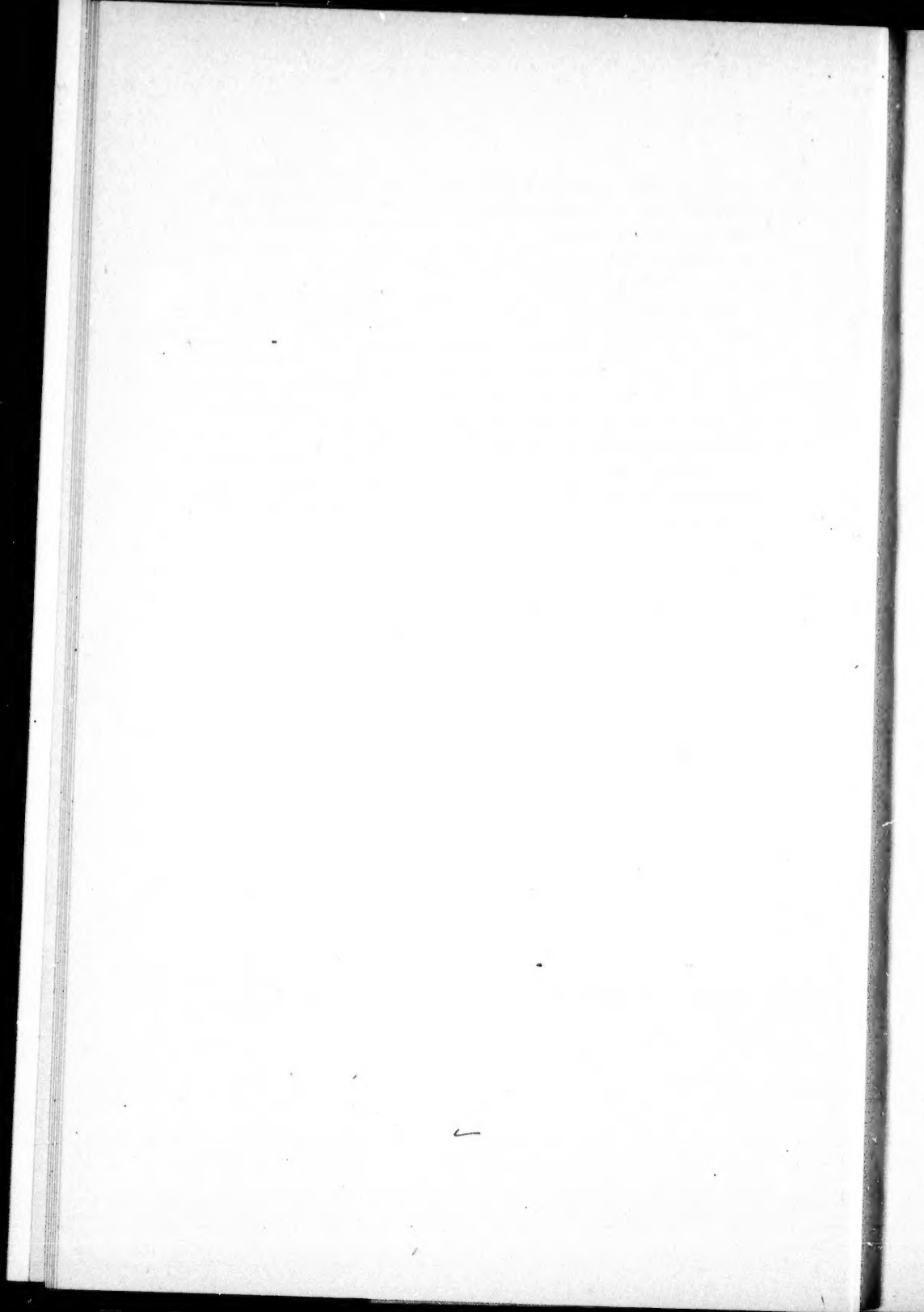
Lescarbot also gives the above on page 391 of his work and adds the note "Compare what Sieur Châplein says above, Chapters 8 and 9."

By the way, this work of Cartier's, of which the title is quoted on page 5 of this pamphlet, was the first printed book relating solely to Canada; so in it he evidently meant to tell everything he knew, and everything he had heard, about that country, of which he was the first explorer.

Champlain *did* hear of "vn sault, entre deux lacs," or Niagara, and gives not only one but three different accounts of it that he heard, in 1603, from the Indians; and the passages from Champlain's "Des Sauvages" above quoted are, in point of time, the second, but as regards details, the earliest known accounts of our great Lake Region; making that book almost as valuable historically as it is rare commercially.

And so: from the brave and adventurous Cartier, to whom it has been erroneously accorded, we must wrest the honor of being the first man in literature to refer to Niagara Falls; and we must award it, nearly 70 years after Cartier's book appeared, to the subsequent Founder of Quebec and the First Governor of New France,—the man who is by far the most picturesque figure in all Canadian History—Samuel de Champlain.





IN THIS PAMPHLET:

The notes in the line outside of the body of the type are by the Author hereof. The notes in the line inside of the body of the type, and alongside the quotations, are by the author quoted.

Of this edition 160 were printed